No excuses not to slim as 'fat gene' found not to affect ability to lose weight

* [Henry Bodkin](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/authors/henry-bodkin/)

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People who are genetically predisposed to be obese can lose weight just as quickly as those who do not carry the so-called [“fat gene”](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/health/news/11407747/Fat-genes-are-to-blame-for-a-fifth-of-obesity.html), new research has revealed.

Published in the British Medical Journal, the findings will offer either a ray of hope to carriers of the gene, or alternatively leave them bang out of excuses, as the study found that such individuals respond equally well to diet, exercise and drug-based weight loss interventions as the rest of the population.

Between 40 and 44 per cent of people carry the FTO risk variant, and around 16 per cent have two copies, making it roughly 70 per cent more likely that they will become obese.

The extent to which genes play a significant role in the development of [obesity](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/09/02/obese-patients-and-smokers-banned-from-all-routine-operations-by/) has long been investigated and debated, however much less is known about the ability of genes to affect losing weight.

An international team of researchers set out to test the relation between the FTO gene and weight-loss interventions using data from almost 10,000 participants of various studies.

They found no relation between FTO and the ability to lose weight, regardless of the type or length of the intervention or age of the participants.

The scientists say the findings support strategies for managing obesity that focus on improving eating patterns and physical activity, since this can achieve sustained weight loss irrespective of the genotype.

Responding to the study, Alison Tedstone, chief nutritionist at Public Health England, cautioned against placing too much hope in the personalised weight-loss plans supposedly tailored to an individual’s DNA which are marketed by healthcare companies.

“Given that obesity and poor diet are leading causes of morbitity in Britain, a rebalancing of research towards whole systems approaches including environmental drivers may be of greater benefit to the population in the long term,” she said.

“The solutions to the obesity crisis must be societal, as well as individual.”

In England nearly 25 per cent of adults are obese, meaning they have a body-mass index (BMI) of 30 or above, and 61.7 per cent are either overweight or obese, meaning their BMI is 25 or higher.